



## Winter 2010



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# Region 8 Update

## From Dr. Guerra...

Dear Region 8:

Happy Holidays to all of you! I hope the season finds you and yours in good health and good spirits!

Calendar year 2010 has been another busy one for Region 8. Fortunately, we had no hurricanes or tropical storms or tornados or other major disasters that required us to drop our routine duties. Instead, we devoted our time to the following public health issues, among others:

- \* **Listeriosis:** The Region 8 Epidemiology Response Team participated in an investigation of 10 cases of listeriosis in hospitalized patients. After a lengthy investigation, sanitarians finally collected samples from chicken salad that included celery that was contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*. As a result, a San Antonio produce processing company was ordered to stop processing produce and recall all products shipped from the plant since January.
- \* **Mumps:** In 2010, DSHS also saw a large increase in mumps cases throughout the state. San Antonio had inmates with mumps in local correctional facilities requiring a vaccination campaign to prevent further spread.
- \* **Typhoid:** Region 8 also saw two imported cases of typhoid this fall.
- \* **Tuberculosis:** The retirement and departure of three key members of the TB program (Cherise Rohr-Allegri, Chris Camareno and Hope Alvarado) and the addition of some new positions has resulted in a lot of staff changes. New staff include Jay Medellin, TB Nurse Consultant; Gus Alejos, TB Nurse; Kay Martinez, Public Health Tech II; and Yolando Maldonado, Binational TB Program Specialist III.
- \* **Special Health and Social Work Services:** Caseloads are on the rise with referrals continuing to pour in. Social workers strive to meet family needs in the four program areas.
- \* **Flu:** Region 8 has provided 44 seasonal flu vaccine clinics throughout the Region. This year's vaccine had H1N1 as one of the Flu A components. The field office staff also continue to provide flu and other vaccines through regular field office scheduling.

A major project I have been working on has been that of formalizing my appointment as Local Health Authority for counties in which Region 8 serves as the local health department. In accordance with Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 121.021, a Local Health Authority (LHA) is a physician appointed to administer state and local laws relating to public health within the appointing body's jurisdiction. A health authority serves for a term of two years and may be appointed to successive terms. LHAs have a variety of duties, including: establishing, maintaining and enforcing quarantine; and aiding the board in relation to local quarantine, inspection, disease prevention and suppression, birth and death statistics, and general sanitation.

In an effort to provide transparency to counties in Region 8, I have asked County Commissioners' Courts to become familiar with the services provided by a Local Health Authority. Some examples of the circumstances under which I have provided LHA services to counties include during tuberculosis outbreaks, the H1N1 pandemic, immunization safety net services, natural disaster and shelter responses, environmental exposures, and medical professional consultations.

Having a Regional Medical Director serve as an LHA is a no-cost service provided to Texas counties. It ensures that a trained, experienced and well-informed public health physician with state-funded liability coverage works as the county's LHA. Serving as LHA in 21 of Region 8's 28 counties also ensures consistency of health protection actions and consistency of communication within communities during times of crisis. In Region 8, Bexar, Comal, Frio, Victoria, DeWitt, Calhoun and Jackson Counties have their own LHAs.

Although, I serve as the Local Health Authority in any Region 8 county that does not appoint an LHA, I have asked County Commissioners' Courts to give me an opportunity to make a presentation to the Court to explain my role in their County. I then ask them to publicly appoint me so that there is a public record of my role and responsibility in each county.

I will continue this process beginning in January, when new County Judges and Commissioners take their seats on Courts throughout the Region.



*People are so worried about what they eat between Christmas and the New Year, but they really should be worried about what they eat between the New Year and Christmas.*

– Unknown

## Overcoming Barriers to Lifestyle Changes

Heather Bayles, TSU Dietetic Intern

It's still the holiday season, but New Years' Resolutions aren't too far away! We've all done it...We make the commitment to eat better, be more active, stop smoking, stay on budget, and then all our good intentions and hard work fall apart somewhere. What happened?!? Take a look at these roadblocks and see what you may be doing to derail your best efforts.

**Woah, Nellie!** It's tempting, once we decide to invest in our own health, to try to address everything all at once. "Tomorrow," we think, "I am going to be a totally different person!" You CAN become more like the person you want to be, but taking on too many challenges in a short period of time may be overwhelming. It is important to set the image of your eventual success in your mind and define your long-term goals, but in order to get there in reality, you must set short-term, realistic, manageable goals. Think of the one or two issues you want to address most, and start with those. Set your goals in terms of days or weeks – no matter how many pounds you may want to lose, healthy weight loss will happen at just one or two pounds per week, and going from no exercise to an hour of vigorous exercise every day could result in injury.

**Help!** No one has to make changes alone. Regardless of the issue you want to address, someone has gone before you, and others are making the same changes now. You may

have friends or family members you can enlist for support. Look to the internet for websites with online tools, personalized plans, and discussion groups. Employers often offer resources or support. Go to the library's self-help section. Ask your health providers for their expert opinions on what works best.

### The tyranny of perfection

Be prepared to relax your ideas of what the change you've decided on will look like. If you wait for perfect weather, the perfect walking shoes, a bigger budget, more support than you have now... well, you may be waiting a long time. Resist the temptation to compare yourself and your surroundings with others' situations. Work with the resources you actually have, today. If it is pouring rain and there's a hole in your sneaker the day you planned to start your daily jogging routine, stay home and do stretches and crunches in your bare feet!

### Quitting warm turkey

Very few of us find it easy to just suddenly stop daily habits that affect the chemistry of our bodies, such as cigarette smoking or the caffeine. Most research shows that allowing for your body to adjust to new conditions results in longer-term success. Cut back on your coffee gradually, or start by replacing your afternoon cup with tea. Taper off on the salt you add to your dinner plate, and make sure to add in other seasonings for a gentle change. Read up on tobacco cessation

options, and ask your healthcare provider to help you decide which one will work best for you.

**The long haul** As your health status, family circumstances, job, and finances change, your health habits may need to change, too. Perhaps you will need to find a different time or way to squeeze in exercise, adjust your food budget, or follow a certain diet to help address a new medical condition. Trying to stick to an old routine that doesn't work for you any more is discouraging. Be flexible and creative. Try something new, and if that doesn't work, try something else!

### (Re)turning a corner

It's pretty tempting to see missteps and setbacks as total failures, and to use them as excuses to abandon our goals. They're actually pretty normal, though. All of us do better on some days than others. The key to living a healthier, happier life is not to walk a fine line all the time, with no mistakes – it is to notice when we have slipped, accept it honestly, and turn back to our efforts without falling into self-judgment and helplessness. Every change is a long process of back and forth, never really finished.

No matter what has happened before, you can do more for yourself today than you did yesterday. Caring for yourself doesn't have to be a chore to get done – think of it as a way to enjoy your life, every day.

## Lightening up your holiday feast

The holiday season is in full swing, and for most of us, that means family dinners, Christmas parties, and New Years' celebrations. The common factor in all these celebrations always seems to be FOOD. You can have all the delicious treats you look forward to all year, but with a little tweaking, can make them a little more friendly to your waistline. (If you're making adjustments to a time-honored family favorite, you may want to give the changes a trial run before the big day!

- Replace full-fat dairy (milk, cream cheese, sour cream) with low-fat
- In baked goods, replace half the fat with unsweetened applesauce
- In baked goods, reduce sugar by ¼ (For example, if the recipe calls for 1 cup of sugar, use ¾ c)
- To get the most flavor for the calories, sprinkle high-calorie items on top of casseroles instead of mixing them in (nuts, cheese, French-fried onions)
- Keep dressing for salads on the side so people can add it to taste
- Try sweet potatoes without the marshmallows (try a sprinkle of cinnamon instead)
- Use Yukon gold potatoes for your mashed potatoes, then cut way back on the butter.
- Baste the turkey with chicken broth not drippings
- Use chicken broth instead of oil in your stuffing
- Try lean sausage in your stuffing, and add extra vegetables
- For pies, eliminate the top crust and/or use a graham cracker crust for the bottom
- Use standard brown-and-serve rolls instead of higher-fat crescent rolls
- Replace the white flour in your baked goods with white whole wheat flour
- Adjust the serving size—make cookies smaller, cut a cake or brownies into more slices, and use smaller cookie cutters
- Enjoy! The holidays are once a year! ★



## (Lighter) Butterscotch Bars

Serves 16

- \* 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- \* 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- \* 1/4 cup butter, softened
- \* 2 large egg whites
- \* 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- \* 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- \* 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- \* 1/4 teaspoon salt
- \* 1/2 cup butterscotch morsels

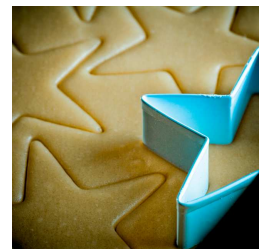
Preheat oven to 350°.

Beat sugars and butter at medium speed of a mixer until well blended (about 4 minutes). Add egg whites and vanilla and beat well. In another bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt; mix to combine. Add flour mixture to sugar mixture and beat at low speed just until blended.

Spread batter evenly into an 8-inch square baking pan coated with cooking spray; sprinkle evenly with morsels. Bake at 350° for 28 minutes or until a wooden toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan on a wire rack.

Per serving: Calories 142, Carbohydrate 24 g, Protein 1.6 g, Fat 4.3 g, Saturated Fat 2.6 g, Sodium 95 mg

Source: *Cooking Light* January 2000



## Spotlight on...Hallettsville!

Theresa Kostelnik RN and Laura Filip HST from DSHS PHR08 Hallettsville presented a program on "Healthy Snacks for Children" at the French Simpson Memorial Library in Hallettsville as part of the summer reading program. A video 'Chuckles and the Super Snacks' was shown which depicted a puppet show set up at a circus. Chuckles the Clown is tired and worn down until he learns about healthy foods and super snacks. Chuckles, aka Megan Kostelnik, a senior student at Hallettsville High School, made an appearance and led the children in a song about healthy snacks. The children learned about the importance of making healthy snack choices and the need for variety of food choices to get important vitamins and minerals they need to stay healthy.



To address local childhood obesity, Theresa Kostelnik RN and Laura Filip, HST collaborated with Texas AgriLife Extension and Hallettsville Pharmacy to host the annual Kids Health Party for 5<sup>th</sup> graders in Lavaca County. This event addressed the importance of healthy food choices and physical activity for kids. This year's Party was held on 10/13/2010 at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Hallettsville, and was attended by 337 students, plus teachers and chaperones from Hallettsville ISD, Sacred Heart Catholic, Moulton ISD, Shiner ISD, Shiner Catholic, Ezzell ISD, Sweet Home ISD, Vysehrad ISD, Yoakum ISD and St. Joseph Catholic schools.

The objectives of the 2010 Kids Health Party were to address the growing epidemic of childhood overweight/obesity; help students identify and adopt healthy food choices and physical activity behaviors; and to increase public awareness of the availability of local agencies as resources for health education. The theme of this year's event was based on the Food Guide Pyramid. There were nine booths/stations with presentations at each focusing on a component of the Food Guide Pyramid.

DSHS staff (Hallettsville, plus the Goliad clinic, Mary Ashton RN and Candy Camacho, Clerk; Floresville, Delma Martinez RN, and Debra Vasquez, Clerk; and Seguin clinic, Lisa Jackson RN and Elly Castaneda, Clerk) manned the **Germ Booth**. Information was provided and instructions given on hand washing, with demonstrations using Glo Germ lotion.

There were a number of other presentations, including **Milk Mustache** (on the importance of milk); **Health Effects** (showing the effects of choices on health); **Blast Off** (an internet game about serving sizes); and **Obstacle Course** (to promote physical activity).

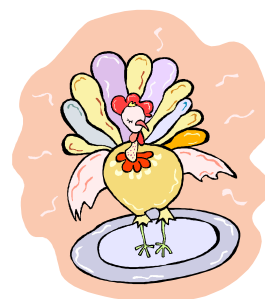
A t-shirt with the "Kids Health Party" logo and a list of the hosts was provided to each student. A healthy meal was served, with assistance of the Lavaca Extension Education Service members, to participants and presenters, with an ice cream snack at the end of the event. The students from the Victoria College School of Vocational Nursing taught the students the Cupid Shuffle and followed with all participants dancing.

This event is made possible with generous donations by many corporate and community sponsors to help make a difference in the lives of children in Lavaca County. The sponsors of this year's event were the Dickson-Allen Foundation, LCRA-Employees' Charities, Acetylene Oxygen Company, TDECU, Boedeker Plastics, McDonald's, First State Bank/Yoakum, Yoakum National Bank, Peoples State Bank, Borden Milk, and Blue Bell Creameries.



## Making the season a little brighter...

Because of the generosity of DSHS Region 8's social work department and other employees who donated, nine families on our area had an extra special Thanksgiving. Each social worker identified a family they work with who could use a little extra help. The department then collected Thanksgiving food items, Roni and Diane created baskets, and on the Friday before Thanksgiving, the social workers delivered the baskets. Thank you to our social work department, and all other Region 8 employees who donated to this great cause! That's what this season really is about!



## New Member of Management Team

Region 8 has a new Communicable Disease Manager—Rita Espinoza, MPH. Most recently, Ms. Espinoza managed the Data and Prevention Group of the Emerging and Infectious Disease Branch in Austin. She received her undergraduate degree in psychology from the University of

Houston and Master of Public Health degree from Tulane University. She has over 10 years of experience in infectious disease epidemiology. She has given numerous presentations at state and national conferences on a variety of topics. Prior to joining the state, she completed a fellowship

with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Cincinnati, OH.

She is the proud mother of an 11 year old son, Alex. In her spare time she enjoys reading and exercising.

## Welcome to new employees!

Please join us in welcoming the newest employees of Region 8! Some are new hires, and some have transferred from other departments:

- The Department of Case Management & Social Work Services has two new staff members who are case managers in the San Antonio office:

- Kristy Wurn
- D'Angela Harder

- Family and Community Health
- Elvia Ledezma, with the Office of Border Health Program
- Food and Drug welcomes:

- Sherry Jackson
- Stacy Haugen

- The Tuberculosis Program welcomes:

- Gus Alejos
- Kay Martinez
- Jacinto Madellin
- Yolanda Maldonado
- Rita Espinoza, Communicable Disease Manager

If you haven't already, please extend a warm welcome to our newest employees!





HEALTH SERVICE  
REGION 8

## Border Binational Health Week

Elvia Ledezma

Border Bi-national Health Week (BBHW) took place the week of October 2-8, 2010. The goal of BBHW is to promote sustainable partnerships to address border health problems. Intended outcomes include increased community and inter-agency networking relationships, increased information sharing and educational opportunities, and increased awareness of the United States-Mexico Border Health Commission including state and local initiatives. Through financial support from the United States-Mexico Border Health Commission, the Amistad BHC and the HOPE-K THC successfully held activities promoting health along the Texas-Mexico border. The OBH for HSR 8 would like to thank all the agencies that participated and helped organize each of these BBHW activities.



La Semana Binacional de Salud Fronteriza (SBSF) se tomó a cabo la semana de Octubre 2-8, 2010. El objetivo de la SBSF es de promover asociaciones sostenibles para dirigir problemas de salud en la frontera. Los resultados destinados incluyen el aumento en relaciones comunitarias e interinstitucionales, aumento en el compartir de información y oportunidades educativas, y el aumento del conocimiento sobre la Comisión de la Salud de la Frontera de México-Estados Unidos inclusive de iniciativas estatales o locales. Por medio del apoyo financiero de la Comisión de la Salud de la Frontera de México-Estados Unidos, la COBINA Amistad y la COTRINA HOPE-K exitosamente tuvieron actividades que promovieron la salud por la frontera de Tejas-México. La OSF de la Región 8 quiere dar las gracias a todas las agencias que participaron y ayudaron a organizar cada uno de estas actividades de la SBSF.

Please contact Alexa George  
with any comments, suggestions  
or submissions.

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